

Nazarenes." The frivolous and witty Antiochians with which they characterized the various parties, events and movements of the times, and they would not fail to find an appropriate nickname for this new religious sect that was beginning to make such a sensation.

### I. Significance of the Text.

1. It evidences the growth of the Church, geographically and numerically. Myriads in Jerusalem and Judea had been converted; the Samaritan towns evangelized; the Gospel preached with success in Caesarea and Damascus; and now Paul and Barnabas had spent one year in Antioch. Christianity was coming into immediate contact with paganism, and it was making a profound impression. Antioch itself was soon to become the center of international missionary enterprise. Christianity was now a distinct power and influence, and its adherents needed a more definite designation than "disciples," "believers," etc. The beginning of a new era must be marked by a new name; the new wine was fermenting and must be poured into a new bottle.

2. It indicates an enlarged conception of the Church's mission and sphere. This distinctive name, conferred by aliens, shows that the Christian brotherhood was no longer regarded as a mere sect of the Jews, but as a society with a new mission and a larger sphere. All nations and classes were now being freely admitted on equal terms, and this new name fitly characterizes a Church "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all." The place and time in which this name became current is significant. It was not in Jerusalem, the city of the old dispensation and of Jewish traditions, but in the Oriental center of Greek and Roman civilizations. And it was not until the new dispensation of grace was fully inaugurated. "Then and there the church received from the world its true and honorable name."

3. It points to Christ as the central object of faith and worship. He was the constant theme of preaching and conversation. Hence this term of contempt was finally appropriated by the disciples themselves as most aptly defining their character and mission. All former designations were summed up in the one word "Christian"; they were "believers" in Christ their Savior, "brethren" in Christ, "saints" purified and consecrated through Christ and "disciples" of Christ their Master. There is said to be in the center of an old European town a lofty marble building in the form of a cross. The streets are so laid out that from every corner you obtain a view of that cruciform pile. So it is with the Church: it is ever "Jesus in the midst," the focal point of all life and worship and activity.

### II. Thoughts Suggested by the Text.

1. What a wonderful history that name has had! What a growth of the Church in territory, numbers, doctrinal knowledge, spirituality and influence! In three centuries that little despised and persecuted band grew to six millions; in ten they numbered fifty millions; and from that time they have been doubling in five hundred years, three hundred, seventy-five and forty, numbering now about six hun-

dred millions. The mustard seed has grown into a tree and the Christian nations are the world powers. The name once an epithet of derision is now one of the most influential in the world's vocabulary.

2. How proud we should be to claim that name! It is an ancient and honorable one. Those who bear it are Christ's namesakes, and those who do not discredit it are promised even a better one: "I will write upon him my new name." It is the title of citizenship in the kingdom of our Lord. The old boast, "I am a Roman citizen," gives way to a prouder claim, "I am a Christian; my citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 1:20). Let us never be ashamed to own that name. A Roman emperor had an architect build him a great theater, which he opened with a massacre of Christians. In the midst of the carnival of horror the architect stood up and shouted, "I, too, am a Christian," and was flung to the wild beasts. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf."

3. We inherit the name; do we exemplify what it implies? Or are we only "called Christians"? To be a Christian is to be a Christ man; to have a personal relation to Christ—faith in him as the divine Saviour, loyalty to him as Lord and Master, consecration to his service and conformity to his life and spirit. It is not to be a mere member of a church, or believer in a system of doctrines, or exemplar of a pure morality, but to have such loving loyalty to Jesus himself that we may truly say, "For me to live is Christ"; so to witness for him by our ordinary conduct and conversation that the world must recognize something different from itself, something requiring a distinctive term, "That man is a Christian"; so that if we should settle in a strange country, our religion would be as recognizable as our nationality, or business, or politics, or social nature.

4. Let us dignify and not degrade that name. Many words, once contemptuous epithets, like Puritan and Methodist, have become enobled by the lives of those to whom they were applied; others, once terms of honor, have become debased. Jesuit, which meant a member of the Society of Jesus, and was therefore almost a synonym of Christian, now excites distrust and abhorrence. The name Christian is exalted or depreciated in direct ratio with the noble or ignoble lives of those who bear it. Therefore "let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

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It requires supreme tact, a large knowledge of human nature, generous instincts, a fine moderation coupled with a firm loyalty to the truth, in order to criticise and to reprove, yet leave no lasting sting. Above all, he who attempts such a thankless office must himself be quite superior to the infirmities and errors upon which he animadverts and which he seeks to correct; he should always command the confidence and esteem of the person he tries to influence, and ought to be a high, unimpeachable example of the quality or virtue he recommends; otherwise his charge will recoil upon himself and call down upon his own head the proverb, "Physician, heal thyself."—John Sparhawk Jones.